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HISTORY OF SLASHING HUD BUDGET

1978 to 1983: HUD budget authority shrank from \$83 billion to a little more than \$18 billion (in 2004 constant dollars) and shelters opened throughout the United States.

1995 – 2011: HUD dismantled 290,588 units of public housing and 360,000 Section 8 units. A total of 650,588 units lost. In March 2012, another 7,107 units were approved for demolition/disposition.

1996 – 2017: HUD funding for new public housing units – the safety net for the poorest among us – has been zero since 1996.

2010 – 2016: HUD housing and community development funding fell \$4.6 billion, or 8.7 percent, since 2010 (adjusted for inflation).

2017: Homeowner tax breaks cost the US Treasury approximately \$140.7 billion, with 75% of this expenditure benefiting homeowners earning more than \$100,000 a year. Total funding in all federal low-income housing assistance programs was \$46 billion — a difference of \$94 billion.

2018 CUTS TO HUD BUDGET

HUD Programs: Proposed: \$40.7 billion budget for all HUD programs, \$6.8 billion (14 percent) below 2016 funding, and about \$7.5 billion (15 percent) below the 2017 levels.

Proposed \$4.1 billion cuts of program funds which eliminates the HOME, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and Choice Neighborhoods, three of the four HUD programs directing flexible aid to poor communities.

Homeless Assistance Grants: \$133 million in cuts to homeless shelter, services and housing programs

Public Housing: Public housing funding slashed by \$2 billion, or about 30 percent. Public housing currently requires more than \$30 billion in repairs and it is estimated 10,000 units a year are lost to maintenance issues.

Housing Vouchers and Subsidies: 250,000 households will lose their rental assistance

Housing vouchers are proposed an allotment of \$19.3 billion which is \$300 million below the 2016 funding level and \$1.7 billion below the amount required to renew all currently issued vouchers in 2018.

Minimum rents would rise from 30% to 35% of a person's income.

Eliminates funding for VASH Vouchers, a \$40 million cut from FY17.

USDA Rural Housing: 60 million cut to rental assistance in rural housing programs. Eliminates farm worker housing loans/grants and housing repair loans

\$6.8 BILLION IN HUD CUTS THREATEN MILLIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS



Across the nation, homeless and housing advocates are fighting against the \$6.8 billion Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget cuts proposed by the Trump administration. The Department is led by former neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who has said that compassion is means not providing “a comfortable setting that would make somebody want to say: ‘I’ll just stay here. They will take care of me’ and that poverty is a “state of mind.”

Since the proposed cuts, which represent a 14 percent reduction to a \$40.7 billion budget, organizations and communities have been resisting by organizing rallies and protests decrying the tremendous decreases in funding. From San Francisco to New York to Chicago, thousands have taken to the streets.

The Community Development Block Grant faces the largest cut of \$4.1 billion. Used for a variety of community projects ranging from streetscape projects to meal programs, the program would be completely eliminated with the proposed budget. The HOME Investment Partnerships Program, used to fund many affordable housing activities such as homeownership and rental housing development, would also be completely eliminated.

The Public Housing Operating Fund, which would lose \$500 million, currently is

used to help subsidize the rent of 1.2 million families. Amongst those who would be hardest hit are the elderly, people with disabilities, and families.

Megan Hustings, director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, says, “If the president’s budget goes through, this is a disaster for our community. Even more people will lose their housing, and there will be stricter rules for people who are in affordable housing. Affordable housing and programs are not being prioritized. No cuts to HUD is a good cut, and we are in a severe housing crisis. We simply cannot afford any cuts to any programs. We need more investment, if anything. It’s similar to the cuts made during the Reagan administration, which we believe caused a great increase in homelessness in the 70s. The cuts will increase homelessness and poverty in America.”

The cuts, which would take effect in 2018, are already being felt in some cities. Some housing authorities have begun tightening their programs, particularly senior housing programs, in preparation for cuts by limiting the number of people on a waiting list or eliminating the list altogether.

In the past, housing authorities have used varied tactics, including wait list and eligibility limitations, to reduce program numbers. Under the “One Strike, You’re

Out” policy enacted in 1996, federal public housing tenants would be evicted if they—or even their guest—engaged in criminal activity on, and sometimes off, the premises.

The cuts would represent the greatest loss in funding since the Reagan administration, when HUD was devastatingly reduced by nearly 70 percent. Still, housing advocates reiterate that HUD budget cuts are nothing new—and that HUD has never been restored to its original budget since the eighties.

According to a statement by the Western Regional Advocacy Project, a coalition of west coast homeless organizations, “We are looking at a 38-year-cycle of draconian cuts to our nation’s affordable housing programs and the direct correlation of how this creates and perpetuates homelessness.”

On some estimates, San Francisco stands to lose over \$114 million annually in federal funds, which could impact 6, 535 households each year—which could triple the number of homeless San Franciscans.

According to Hustings, the budget will most likely be delivered by the end of July.

Jennifer Friedenbach, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, asks “Look around the streets of the major US cities and you can see for yourself the effects of our last HUD cuts. Can we really afford to do this again?” ■

HOMELESS, BIKE ADVOCATES FIGHT AGAINST CHOP SHOP LEGISLATION



TJ JOHNSTON

An ordinance prohibiting outdoor bicycle assembly is on track to pass at the Board of Supervisors, and it could lead to penalizing homeless people and seizure of their bicycles, according to homeless advocates.

The board's Land Use and Transportation Committee sent it to the full board on July 10 on a 2-1 vote. If it passes there, the ordinance would outlaw open-air "chop shops" where bicycles are put together and sold. The proposal, authored by District 8 Supervisor Jeff Sheehy, defines "chop shops" as operations on public streets with five or more bicycles or five or more bicycle parts, among other provisions.

The panel heard opposing views from members of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, Democratic Socialists of America and the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes the Street Sheet.

Opponents criticized the measure as an ineffective way to combat bike theft while targeting unhoused people who rely on their bicycles for transportation and store extra parts for police scrutiny.

The ordinance comes at a time when San Francisco grapples with sprouting encampments throughout the city. The section that empowers police to ticket people and impound bicycles struck opponents as unfair to homeless people.

Coalition on Homelessness organizer Dayton Andrews told the panel that the ordinance's definition of a chop shop "is the definition of any bicycle owner's garage."

Under the ordinance, people with impounded bicycles can retrieve them

if they can prove some proof of ownership, such as a registration or serial number, within 15 days. But the Coalition on Homelessness said in a policy analysis that homeless people often lose documents and identification when living on the streets.

James West, a homeless person who helped build Box City units as part of the Saint Francis Homelessness Challenge, recalled an incident where providing such proof didn't deter cops from impoundment.

"I heard they (police) run the bikes through and they took it anyway, at the same time it wasn't reported stolen," he said.

Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who dissented in the committee vote, took a different approach in his opposition. He said that he inquired police — but got no reply — on whether they have a place to store confiscated bikes and the staff to watch them. He also pointed out that bicycle theft is already against the law, with "organized elements" operating theft rings.

"The question is do we have the police's will to enforce the tools we already have in our books," he said. But Peskin also alluded to the ordinance's impact on homeless people.

"This legislation only deals with it as an outside phenomenon, not an inside phenomenon," he said.

Using data from the city's 311 telephone system, Sheehy pointed out that over 700 calls were made to report stolen bikes, with most of the incidents reported to the police station serving his district.

The full board is scheduled to vote on the ordinance on July 18. ■

CITY CONSIDERS POLICE USE OF TASERS FOR THE SIXTH TIME

Grassroots movements of people organized under the banner of Black Lives Matter have put law enforcement under a whole new level of scrutiny. The public outcries and unrest of the communities of Ferguson, Baltimore, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles have unleashed a new push toward a different kind of relationship between communities and law enforcement. One that employs new technologies and techniques. The United States Department of Justice has recommended that local law enforcement explore reducing the use of force, as well as less than lethal and nonlethal alternatives to traditional techniques of restraint.

The first Taser was invented in 1969 by Jack Cover, a NASA scientist. He named the device after his favorite childhood character, Tom Swift. By 1974, Tom [A] Swift's Electric Rifle (TASER) was completed. The weapon was intended to give police the means to safely disarm and detain aggressively non-compliant suspects, without lethal force or a firearm.

The weapon launches two darts that penetrate the target. The darts are connected to the weapon and the electrodes release electricity (a 50,000-volt shock followed by 100 microsecond pulses of 1,200 volts), inducing pain and paralyzing the person's muscles, often causing them to fall over. But Tasers have changed considerably since their inception. Their use by law enforcement has been mired in controversy since Tom and Jack Smith formed Taser International (later renamed Axon) with Cover. Sold as a safe alternative to other methods of law enforcement, the corporation has worked very hard to avoid any association with any of the deaths attributed to their product. The effect of the device on the heart only became known after a string of high profile deaths followed the initial rollout of the 'less than lethal' weapon.

Dr. Tseng, who appeared at a recent San Francisco Police Commission meeting wrote an article entitled, "Relation of Taser Deployment to Increase in In-Custody Sudden Deaths" which was published in the American Journal of Cardiology in 2009:

"Although Tasers are marketed as a safer alternative to subdue prisoners and suspects in law enforcement custody, recent reports have described a temporal



association between use of stun guns and hundreds of in-custody sudden deaths in North America."

In this epidemiologic study of police and sheriff departments of moderate to large cities in California using Tasers, we found a statistically significant 6.4-fold increase in the rate of in-custody sudden deaths not involving lethal (firearm) force in the first full year of Taser deployment compared with the pre-deployment period. Although Taser use has been advertised to decrease Lethal Force Deaths (by firearms) and prevent officer injuries, we observed no decrease in the rate of either event after Taser deployment. To the contrary, departments had a twofold increase in the rate of Lethal Firearm Deaths in the year of Taser deployment and the first full year after deployment, whereas the rate of serious Officer Injuries requiring visits to an emergency room was unchanged" (2009: 879).

"...We speculate that early liberal use of Tasers may have contributed to these findings, possibly escalating some confrontations to the point that firearms were necessary" (Tseng et al. 2009: 879).

Axon is the sole manufacturer of Taser devices used by law enforcement. Today, Axon sells Tasers to law enforcement in over a hundred countries, to over 16,000 agencies, and there are over a half-million Tasers in use by law enforcement worldwide today. The push for reform has spurred the growth of many manufacturers of "less lethal" weapons, an unintended consequence of police reform.

Tasers have been lauded as the solution to violent policing, a safe alternative to guns and batons, but are particularly lethal for the most vulnerable populations: Pregnant women and children, as well as people with heart disease, chronic mental and other physical health conditions. On July 19, the San Francisco Police Commission

HOW CAN US CITIES FIGHT BACK AGAINST GENTRIFICATION?

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER MOSCOWTIZ, AUTHOR OF HOW TO KILL A CITY: GENTRIFICATION, INEQUALITY, AND THE FIGHT FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

JARED PABEN

Insufficient income taxes on the rich, cash-starved local governments, and opportunistic developers constitute the ingredients for a particularly bitter pill for low-income people: higher rents.

So says Peter Moskowitz, who has written a new book exploring gentrification and its impacts on American cities. But what particularly worries him is the fact that young white people moving to cities—those urbanites who contribute to gentrification while also suffering the effects of it—fail to recognize they can be part of a badly needed mainstream political movement for housing.

“They just see themselves as like, ‘Well, I just have to make more money to afford more rent.’ Or, ‘Well, I should move to a different city,’” Moskowitz said. “It’s much easier to see yourself as individualized than it is to see yourself as part of this collective action that needs to take place.”

That collective action is materializing in cities overseas.

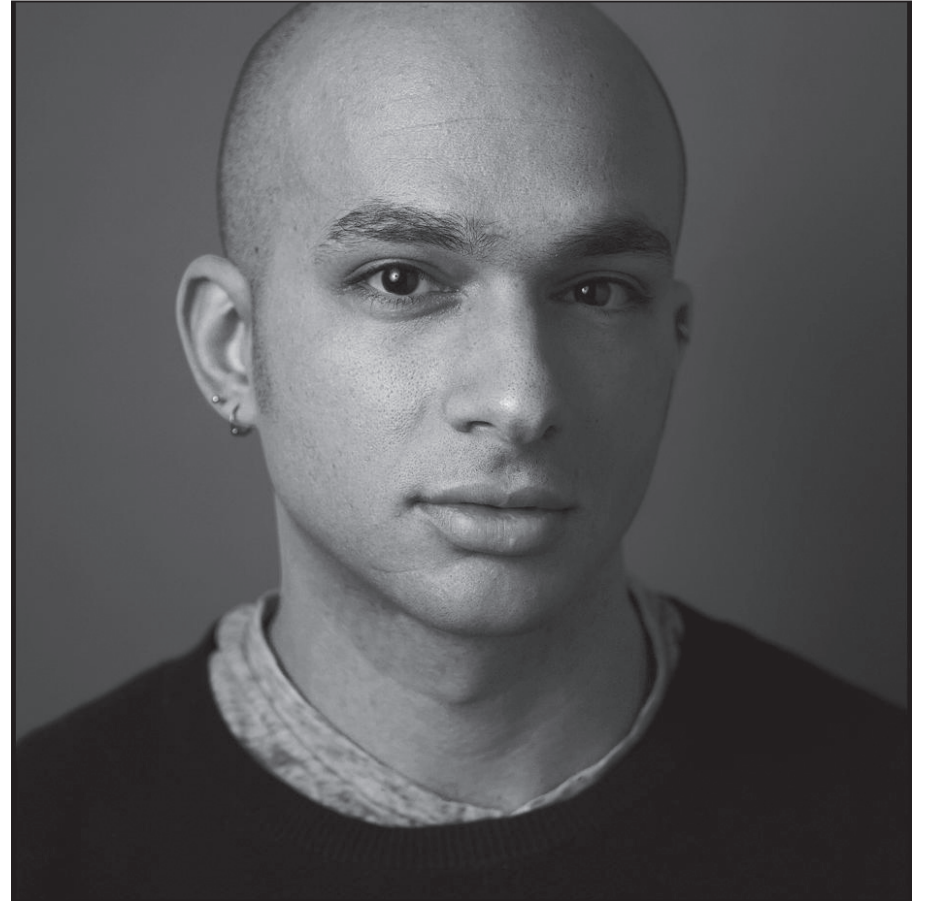
“It’s not uncommon in Berlin to have tens of thousands of people on the streets protesting gentrification, which seems almost unfathomable in most U.S. cities right now,” he said.

Moskowitz is author of *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood*, which he describes as a narrative journey through gentrification in San Francisco, New Orleans, Detroit and New York City. The book was published in March.

The Philadelphia-based journalist and writer spoke with *Street Roots* about gentrification, its causes, its effects and some potential solutions.

To set the scene for readers, I was wondering if you could give us a sense of what gentrification looks like on the ground. If I were walking down the street, how would I recognize it?

It looks like a couple of different things. When it’s first starting out, you might just see the renovations. Or you might you see new trees being planted. It might look like a neighborhood is really coming back to life, especially if it’s happening in a neighborhood that’s been disinvested in for a long time. Slowly but surely things will change. How I see the end of gentrification—or the last stage—is that neighborhoods move into a different scale of living. Buildings get bigger, they become completely unaffordable to the people that used to live in that neighborhood, and the entire feel of a neighborhood changes because it now caters to that new demographic. So I think the changes can start out as subtle, but nowadays, especially in a city like Portland, I think you’re seeing less of that



mom-and-pop-moving-in-and-fixing-up-a-house kind of gentrification and more of the corporate, top-down gentrification where condos are all of a sudden plopped into a neighborhood.

What are some of the ingredients that lead to the gentrification of different parts of cities?

I think you should go all the way back to how cities became attractive real estate investments in the first place. If you look at right after World War II and the creation of the suburbs—really right after the Great Depression, which is when the suburbs started to be created—the federal government essentially subsidized the mortgages of white people and redlined communities of color. And what “redlining” means is literally they drew red lines on maps and said, “Banks cannot lend here.” And they determined what neighborhoods those would be based on how many people of color lived in them. And so what that essentially did was push an entire generation of white people out to the suburbs and give them wealth in the form of housing and create a completely disinvested urban core. So now fast forward to the 2000s, and what’s an attractive real estate investment if you’re an investor? The suburbs are already built out. Commute times are ridiculous. No one wants to live there anymore because it’s boring. And cities all of a sudden seem like a great investment: They’re cheap. You can buy a bunch of single-family homes and build a huge condo there and get a great return on your investment. That’s the main ingredient is this decades-long history of disinvestment in the cities. And now that kind of seesaw has tipped it the other direction.

I also think you have to look at how governments fund themselves these days, when tax rates on the rich are so low, especially at the federal level. We used to have 70, 80, 90 percent income tax rates for the richest Americans, and now that’s down to about 39 percent. And with all the loopholes, even lower than that. That used to pay for things like public schools. That used to pay for things like public transit, for public housing, for housing subsidies. And now none of that exists, so cities are fending for themselves, and the only way that they can fund their tax base is to attract rich people. That merges with developers’ interests to buy up real estate for cheap. And cities all of a sudden say, ‘Hey, want to bring a bunch of rich people to the city? Well that’s good for our bottom line. Here’s some land, here’s some tax breaks. Please come and do what you will.’

Some of what you mentioned about mortgage policies and redlining I recognize from the Vice article you wrote focusing on LGBTQ communities in New York. Looking at that, are there examples of specific places where it’s been most disheartening – or even maddening – to see this occur? You talked about New York, but you also mentioned in “How to Kill a City” New Orleans, San Francisco and Detroit.

I visited those four cities, and I’ve never actually been to Portland, but I do hear it’s pretty bad there. But yeah, I think pretty much every large and mid-sized city is under pressure right now. To me, the most disheartening is a place like New Orleans because of how (Hurricane) Katrina decimated the city and how the city used

will accept public comment on whether the San Francisco Police Department should have these weapons. This will be the sixth time that the police commission has grappled with this question. All previous attempts have failed due to community advocacy speaking out against the danger—and violence—of Tasers. Once advertised as “non-lethal,” from June 2001 to June 2007, there were 245 deaths in the United States due to Tasers. While there have been many changes and improvements on the design of Tasers since 1974, the weapon continues to kill. In 2015, the Washington Post reported that 48 people died in police encounters involving tasers. In addition, due to many lawsuits the model has been forced to change. In particular, the weapon has had to be toned down, and according to LAPD, is only effective at restraining people 49% of the time.

According to Mike Leonosio, a national expert on the weapon, “San Francisco made the right decision to hold off on adopting this weapon... to date I have still not heard exactly what problem the department is trying to solve with this weapon.”

Re-engineering use of force requires a fundamental shift in policy, mindset and training from the long established approach of rushing in and using command and control tactics to using time, distance, cover and rapport. This is critical for both the public and police officers safety. Electronic Control weapons are inconsistent with re-engineering the use of force and a policy and training of time, distance, cover and rapport. A taser is the opposite because it requires close contact with an individual (Think between 7-15 feet). At a time that requires substantial officer training on how to slow down situations and create time, distance, cover and rapport, a taser—which can only operate by close contact—would undermine the very skills the new training is attempting to develop.

According to training guidelines of officers should be more than 20 feet away from subjects armed with sharp edged weapons. It would be safer for officers to use time, distance, strong verbal de-escalation techniques, and wait it out for the person to calm down. If the Taser is used, de-escalation goes out the window. As Leonisio points out, it is important to analyze exactly what scenarios in which this weapon would be used, and whether this weapon is appropriate for that situation. Many members of the public wrongly believe that Tasers are a replacement for guns, when they are not, and in fact are not recommended for use in lethal force situations by both Axon and the police departments who have the weapon.

What the City of San Francisco must decide is whether it is worthwhile to potentially expose its citizens and officers to more harm. They must weigh the cost to the department in terms of training, liability and the human cost of using this technology on people. ■

THE INVISIBLE HOUSING SUBSIDY

UNLIMITED, FEDERALLY FUNDED AND SPECIFIC TO HOMEOWNERS, THE SUBSIDY HAS NEVER RECEIVED THE SAME CRITICISM OR CUTS AS PUBLIC HOUSING SUBSIDIES

When is a housing subsidy not a housing subsidy?

When it subsidizes homeownership.

When is a housing subsidy economic stimulus and not charity?

When the money supports bankers, real estate agents and developers.

In 2017, the federal government subsidized homeownership to the tune of \$140.7 billion dollars; it is estimated 75 percent of this allocation went to households earning over \$100,000.00. In 2017, the federal government subsidized rental assistance housing to the tune of \$46.0 billion dollars, all of which went to households poor enough to “qualify” for this assistance. Guess which of these two housing assistance programs of the federal government are being proposed for massive cuts in 2018. We’ll give you one hint: bankers and real estate agents are not freaking out!

By some estimates, Trump’s proposed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget will lose over \$7.5 billion dollars in funding when all 2017 funding allocations are tabulated at the end of the year; on other calculations, it could be \$6.4 billion. Either way, nobody is disputing the reality that upwards of 250,000 households will almost certainly lose their housing support, that the 10,000

units of public housing lost each year due to lack of maintenance will dramatically increase and that Community Development Block Grants, HOME, and other programs targeted to serving poor communities will be eliminated.

Nor is there any disputing that \$133 million dollars will be cut from Homeless Assistance programs or that rents will increase from 30 percent to 35 percent of a person’s income, that \$60 million will be cut in Rural Housing rental assistance as well as the elimination of farmworker housing loans and grants.

All this pain and suffering so that HUD’s budget can be reduced to \$40.7 billion while homeowner housing subsidies are expected to rise to \$162.5 billion.

What is the difference between a homeowner subsidy and a renter subsidy, you may wonder. Not much in terms of a fiscal impact on the federal budget, but very different in terms of administration. Homeowner subsidies are administered by the IRS and are allocated to homeowners via tax breaks; renter subsidies are administered by HUD and are paid out to property owners or public housing authorities. Two different programs with very, very different sets of protocols, rules, and qualifications, but both are equally housing assistance programs and both equally cost

the federal government money. If you owe me \$50 and I tell you to keep it (IRS), I just gave you \$50. On the other hand, if you ask me for \$50 and I give you \$50 (HUD/USDA), it costs me \$50. That’s economics 101, simple.

So why is it that one type of housing assistance has no cap on costs, has no eligibility requirements except being in debt with a mortgage, and isn’t considered charity?

Instead, it is seen as economic stimulus and good and healthy for America’s economy. On the other hand, the much, much smaller renter housing assistance program has a byzantine screening process, has thousands and thousands of households on its waiting list, is hotly debated each year, and consistently cut as part of the federal budget process. Because it is categorized as charity to the poor rather than economic stimulus, and certainly is not considered good or healthy for America’s economy.

Since housing is a good and healthy thing for homeowners, it only makes sense that it would be a good and healthy thing for renters. Since money owed and not collected is the same as money expended, then surely both forms of housing support are of equal value and both have a financial impact on our federal budget.

So what could possibly be the justifica-

tion for there to be such a growing disparity between the two programs?

The only logical conclusion one can reach when these two programs are seen as being of equal benefit and financial burden is that who is benefiting from each of these programs—poor people versus homeowners—dictates their worth.

In the cold reality of neo-liberal American economic policies, what benefits bankers, real estate and developers far outweighs what benefits poor people and communities.

If “WE” can afford \$140 billion dollars to support housing for Homeowners, the argument that “WE” can not afford \$140 billion dollars to support renters seems shallow, and frankly, it sounds like bullshit.

Until we recognize housing as a human right and enact policies and budget allocations that reflect that right, along with quality education, economic security, and health care, we will not end homelessness. So the Western Regional Advocacy Project is calling on the federal government to: 1) Restore federal affordable housing funding to comparable 1978 levels; 2) Turn empty buildings into housing; 3) Improve living conditions in existing affordable housing; 4) Put moratorium on demolitions without replacement and right of return; 5) Stop criminalizing poverty and homelessness.

Shelters are ShelterLESS

BY ANGEL MASON

Providence is more like ProviDON’T. Sanctuary was more to me like a mortuary. No one listened to my impossible mission. No one cared except I heard a staff lady say, “Dang I missed the fight”.

I thought to myself and asked her “Is that all you people cAre about is the fight you missed?”.

Wow! What an embarrassing sight.

Grown staff acting like kids. Meanwhile-i get no second helping at dinner do to my truthful fibs

HAAllelujah! God birthed a revolutionary. So what I really want to say is forget sanctuary. Hahaha. HAitians Do It Better.

On to Providence shelter so feet don’t fail me now even though it’s broken. How could bethel shelter tell me to leave if I was just rolling a joint in the hall, dang even though it’s allowed-i wasn’t SMOKING. Lol.

Laugh at what I say now, i’ll just write about it later. Hahaha. It’s just me myself and I and my creator.

All these shelters suck including some of the staff they don’t care about anyone but themselves.

So to the shelters and shelterless From the bottom of my heart I think then I too, shall pass :-). Hahaha HAitians Do It BetteR. Hahaha HAitianSDoltBetteR. :-) ...

EVICTION!

BY DIEGO DELEO

I’M BEING EVICTED.
I’M INNOCENT.

Evicted for whatever reason,

The obvious one is greed.

Senior at age 70 (me 81), some older, to be castigated by this snake of law might be legal, but it’s immoral for sure.

Having lived where I am for decades

With my family (a widower no), it Isn’t just a place to stay, it’s my home —an emotional investment.

Mayor Lee, Supervisors, you’ve entered

The elite group with the Honorably attached.

Very well then, act like it, do the honorable

Thing:

Make the active evictions “null and void”

So I can live the rest of my life in peace.

Defend Our Housing, Our Right to Exist in Our Communities & Oppose Trump's Racist Wall

Join us Friday, July 21st - 4 pm
San Francisco Civic Center

Homeless People's Popular Assembly
Music, Art
and A Celebration of Our combined Strengths with fellow WRAP Members from California, Colorado & Oregon

More info contact:
Coalition On Homelessness
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RODNEY: “I DON’T WIN EVERY BATTLE, BUT I TRY.”

I grew up in Columbus, Ohio. The first part of my life was pretty violent. My dad was an alcoholic drug dealer and he was a very violent man, but the second part was pretty cool. Me and my stepdad spent a lot of time working on getting and feeling better, but I was already traumatized. My stepdad had a hard time with me, because I never told anyone about my trauma, and I had a lot of trauma in my early years of life.

My real father took me to the bars at a very young age. The difference with my stepdad was an alcoholic but he was a fun alcoholic, and he went to work everyday. I learned some good work ethics from him. We owned a fish market, and I used to work there with my dad, and then at my dad’s apartment complex—I was a pretty hard working kid.

I went to Catholic schools, and I played sports. Football was my favorite, but I was best at track. I ran the hurdles. I had three sisters and I was the oldest, the only boy, so my childhood was mixed.

I went to the military after high school. And there was more trauma. In the military, it was a very violent environment. I didn’t make it very long there. They knew that there was something going on with me, but I never saw a psych or anything. I was stationed in Jackson, South Carolina. I was supposed to go to Germany. Thank God I didn’t. I would be in the fields shooting opium and they would shoot me. The main reason I joined the military was because my best friend was getting beat up by his dad. So we said, we either kill him or get into the military. We got into the military. It definitely triggered my PTSD.

Eventually, I ended up as an alcoholic on the streets of San Francisco for many years. I was selling the Street Sheet in the Tenderloin. I was 25 years old and homeless.

Besides the *Street Sheet*, I also was a street vendor. I would buy stuff and sell it at 8th and market, and I faced a lot of police harassment. I wanted to make a black corner, because we—black people—didn’t have any place to sell, and I thought it could be something positive we could do. But it went bad real fast: People started drinking and using the bathroom on the corner, so I left and stopped doing that.

I used to watch people’s cars in front of the Main Library. I would tell people, “Hey, I’m homeless. Those are my blankets over there. I’ll watch your car.” And I got tips that way. I had a little creative mind and my job that way.

Before, there was a law that said if you did a serious crime three times you would be put in prison for twenty-fives years to life. I was facing the third strike and I never committed a violent crime. One was for breaking into my own



PHOTO: ROBERT GUMPERT

house! One was for possession of drugs. They gave me four years for 1/100 gram of the meth. If I hadn’t taken that deal, they would have given me a much longer sentence. I couldn’t afford an attorney, of course.

When I was incarcerated, I started learning how to make alcohol in jails. I was drinking more and doing drugs. My alcoholism got to the point where I became a street alcoholic—just homeless and wandering around and I’d be put in jail. I stopped drinking because I didn’t want to go to jail anymore. I knew if I quit drinking, I wouldn’t go to jail.

I met my first wife in the Tenderloin. She was a very interesting woman. She was a hippie with a PhD, but she passed away. I got married right down the street in the Tenderloin and I stayed married for five years, and, for those five years, I stayed sober. I was even a youth director at the YMCA, and I could really tell when a child was traumatized, because I know what it is like. I also was a part of Alcoholics Anonymous and continued to do that for many years, but I relapsed again and was back on the streets when she

started getting really, really sick and died.

After that, I got sober again. I went to a veterans program, and I was in school at the same time to be a certified community health worker at City College. I had no clue that I could go to the VA and receive benefits—and then I learned I had benefits at the VA. A guy took me to the VA and he said I had benefits coming.

I became a benefits counselor for veterans—I would drive around and take them to their appointments with American Veterans. They fought for me to have an office at the VA Hospital! I worked for them for three years, and I also got married again. That was a huge mistake. Her mother and my mother told me not to marry her, and I did it anyway.

Then, I started working for the government, and I didn’t like the way that I was treated nor my clients. Obama signed this program, which was about formerly homeless veterans helping currently homeless veterans get a job. I didn’t even have an office; I’d meet my clients in coffee shops or wherever. The thing that got to me was that they were only interested in getting the veteran a job—they didn’t care

about their issues. It was just about filling the quota, and I couldn’t do that. I’ll never do that again.

My mentor died; he was an attorney and he was my best friend and a brother to me. I loved Gary dearly and he was a recovering alcoholic, too. And then my sponsor from AA died within a two-month period, my mother called and said she was diagnosed with cancer, and I got a divorce—and she took everything. It was overwhelming with everything happening at once. So I started drinking and using drugs again. Everyone that comes into my life is just gone. I get close to them, and they either die or leave.

I moved to Fremont, and I meant a new mentor, who knew about harm reduction. I met his wife first. I was outside panhandling and she found out that I was a veteran. She and her husband were veterans, too. They took me to their house, and they didn’t even know me, and they said you can stay here as long as you want. Here’s the key. I even became a godfather to his son, and I fell in love with his two black labs.

I went from there to Treasure Island, and the VA gave me housing over there. It was a trip, because my ex-wife works for their administration and suddenly they denied me housing because I wasn’t going to PTSD groups. That’s not a reason to deny someone for housing—it’s a reason for them to give someone housing. So they switched my housing to a place in the Mission. There’s a rooftop bar on top of it—El Techo—but alcohol doesn’t affect me that way anymore.

I don’t win every battle, but I try.

I sell the *Street Sheet* because I love people. I love interacting with people. I’m a community health worker, so often I talk to people. I want to hone my skills, because I want to run a transitional home for people. I also want to get another social services degree. I got more hands-on experience than a lot of social workers, but in City College I also learned de-escalation tactics, how to deal with people with mental disabilities like myself. I always sat in front of the classroom and I really studied hard. I put 100% in selling the *Street Sheet*, because I believe you should do the best you can in everything you do. I treat it as a job, because it is a job. I give information to people, because it’s important that people understand what homeless people go through on a daily basis. Selling the *Street Sheet*, I feel valuable to others.

One thing: A lot of people didn’t choose to be homeless. I still have high hopes for myself. When I became homeless, I still had those hopes. I wish they would know that homeless people are hard workers. ■

You can find Rodney selling the Street Sheet near the Walgreens on Geary and 42nd Avenue.

GENTRIFICATION

FROM PAGE 3

that as an opportunity to essentially kick out 100,000 African-Americans. There are now 100,000 fewer African-Americans living there than there were before Katrina. And you know, the politicians essentially said—the governor at the time, Kathleen Blanco—said it took the storm of a lifetime to create the opportunity of a lifetime. And they dismantled the school system, they dismantled the public housing system. So that was just the most direct and evil—for lack of a better word—version of gentrification I saw. But I really think anywhere it’s happening it’s sad. Because even if it does bring new public transit or revitalization in an aesthetic sense to a neighborhood, it’s pointing to this deeper sickness of how we fund our cities and how we think of our cities.

In your research, did you find that liberal cities are more prone to this than conservative ones? Or did you see any kind of difference at all with regard to political philosophies in a city?

I don’t really think political philosophy matters that much because, nowadays, liberals and conservatives have very little differences when it comes to city policy. New York, for example, or San Francisco— they’re both good examples, but let me talk about San Francisco. They’re socially liberal. They’re pro-gay marriage. But they’re still giving tax breaks to developers. They’re still giving tax breaks to large companies. They’re still underfunding public transit and public housing. So there are maybe degrees of difference between these cities, between a conservative city and a liberal city. At the end of the day, I don’t really think it matters that much these days. Every city is kind of addicted to funding themselves via gentrification.

Is that fair to say, in general, that government fiscal policy is a prime driver?

Yeah, I think it’s the prime driver. Let’s say you have a hundred poor people and a hundred middle-class people and a hundred rich people in a city. The poor people are going to require more resources in terms of housing, in terms of public transit, and all those things. Theoretically, the rich people in a classical Keynesian economic model would fund those poor people, but because we don’t have high enough income taxes, we have to extract wealth in other ways. And that’s essentially become the job of city governments, is to convince rich people to spend their money in cities. Whether that’s buying a condo so they can extract it through property taxes or coming there as tourists, whatever it may be. Michael Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York, one day on the radio said if we could just get a couple more billionaires to live in New York, so many of our problems would be solved. That’s really the modus operandi of cities: How do you get as many rich people

living there as possible?

That’s an interesting idea. It almost sounds like the land-use laws that allow this kind of upzoning are really being driven by a lack of tax revenue, and that’s what’s having the downstream effects on low-income people in those neighborhoods.

Exactly.

But isn’t there something to be said for upzoning areas to allow more density, to allow more transit-oriented development, walkable cities, things like that?

Sure. I think it is unfortunate American cities were developed in this really silly way that was based on automobiles, and it does make sense to create walkable cities. But the problem is that you want to do that in a way that doesn’t just end up creating these rich enclaves. You can’t just use buzzwords like “walkability” or something. You have to actually create policy that protects people. Looking at Williamsburg in Brooklyn, for example, that was completely upzoned to have 30-story-tall, 50-story-tall condo towers. Before, it was kind of an abandoned industrial waterfront. Is that really a problem? Not necessarily. But if the people living on the next block don’t have rent control, then they’re essentially forced out. And if they don’t invest an equal amount in public transit as they did upzoning, then you have what you have now. They literally can’t fit enough people on the EL Train. It doesn’t work anymore. And I assume the same thing is happening in Portland. They’re building more densely. That’s great. But if you’re building more densely and you’re not protecting the people across the street from the effects of that, then what’s the point? If you’re doing transit-oriented development without adding transit, then what’s the point?

What are some concrete steps that American cities can take to mitigate some of these impacts on low-income people?

In terms of government solutions, I think the most pressing thing is rent control across the board, universal rent control. And I believe essentially every city should have that. I think a lot of cities get scared that if they institute rent control, then it doesn’t give incentives for landlords to fix up places or to even buy up buildings. But rent control in Detroit doesn’t have to be the same as rent control in Portland, which doesn’t have to be the same as rent control in New York. Every city can figure out a system and a metric by which to cap people’s rent.

In terms of other government solutions, I really think higher taxes are the way to go, but we’re so far from there in this country. The biggest solution is we have to start building a political movement around housing. Housing is not thought of really politically in this country. In

the last presidential election, it wasn’t mentioned once during the entire campaign, even though it’s everyone’s biggest expense, not only in cities but in suburbs, too. We have food-justice movements; we have anti-poverty movements. There’s not a mainstream housing movement in this country, which is kind of baffling to me and is something I think needs to change if we have a hope of changing how we live.

To play devil’s advocate a little bit, if the private sector is looking at an area and investing a lot of money in there and creating jobs and bringing in tourists, does that always have to be bad?

I think if communities can wrest control from that situation, it doesn’t necessarily have to be bad. In Detroit, for example, they’re working on instituting a community benefits ordinance where big developments have to talk to community members. Before they move in, they have to guarantee a certain number of jobs to go to local residents for publicly funded developments like stadiums and things like that. So I think there are ways to wrest control away from corporations and more towards citizens, and that can give people a better say in how development happens. It’s not like people living in the outer neighborhoods of Detroit don’t want to see development. Because I think people would rather live next to a bunch of houses that are filled with people than live on a block of abandoned houses and wild dogs, which is what a lot of Detroit is. So it’s not like people are saying, “Don’t come here. Don’t develop.” In some places, like in San Francisco and New York, it’s a different story: People are saying that, for good reason. But in places where development could be used, I don’t think it’s viewed as a completely negative. I think people are just saying, “We want a say in how this happens, and we want to make sure that it benefits everyone and not just the developer.”

I’m kind of an incurable optimist. Have you ever seen an example where investments are done right in a community, where the community had input and got benefit from that?

I think there are lots of examples of communities revitalizing their own neighborhoods. If you look at Jefferson-Chalmers in Detroit, or even the Lower Ninth Ward right now in New Orleans, both of those places are facing pressures from gentrification. But also they’re communities coming together and rebuilding parks and rebuilding houses and having neighborhood watch groups and things like that. I don’t know if there’s ever been a successful corporate redevelopment that didn’t have negative impacts on low-income people. I think there’s always going to be fallout from that. ■

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP

Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP

Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings,

contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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TENT CITIES: FROM THE STREETS TO THE PRISONS



In San Francisco, thousands of homeless people find shelter on street corners wrapped in sleeping bags or shielded by the thin canvas of tents. Tent cities have popped up around the Bay Area and around the country, a response to an economy that has abandoned poor and homeless people. Rather than offer people housing and respite from the inhospitable and unlivable conditions of the streets, the city has responded with brutal encampment sweeps, exorbitant citations, and incarceration, making the crisis nearly intractable.

Hundreds of miles to the south, hundreds of inmates are issued striped jumpsuits and sent out to labor under the hot Arizona sun before returning to sleep in canvas tents that can reach 122 degrees Fahrenheit. This prison camp, known as Tent City, is the brainchild of former Maricopa County sheriff, Joe Arpaio, a man famous for his inventive and cruel punishments who himself compared the Tent City to a concentration camp. In an attempt to humiliate residents, Tent City issues pink underwear and towels, now emblematic of the camp. On Thursdays, inmates are tasked with burying the bodies of poor people in the county cemetery.

These inmates are sent to Tent City as punishment for various nonviolent crimes, from public intoxication to drug possession to car theft, many of which are crimes related to lack of access to mental health treatment, housing, or rehabilitation (read: poverty). Some are also there because they are undocumented immigrants. In fact, at one point Arapaio led a forced march of 200 immigrants from a detention center to Tent City in a publicity stunt also bent on humiliation.

This is collectively how we have chosen to respond to the challenges posed by disparity and inequality in this country: Poor people are backed into impossible corners and then punished with homelessness, incarceration, deportation, or all three. Society has made peace with the idea that certain human beings should live outdoors in intolerable conditions, and without basic dignity, be it comfortable underwear or access to toilets. If we are truly to end homelessness, we must address the structural violence that puts people on the streets and leads to mass incarceration. We cannot be passive when we see our neighbors losing their homes, being dragged off by ICE agents, or being sentenced to time in deplorable prisons.

Several months ago, thanks to significant public pressure, Maricopa’s new sheriff announced that the prison camp would be closing, but prisoners at Tent City say little movement has been made toward actually shutting down operations. As the criminal justice system is forced to acknowledge that tents are not adequate shelter for inmates, we must continue to work toward a San Francisco that affirms that homeless people deserve safe and stable housing, just as all people do. Being forced to urinate in public because you have no access to a toilet; walking around feeling filthy all week because you have nowhere to shower, being caught making love to your partner because you have no door to lock, these are just a few of the many indignities homeless San Franciscans must endure on a daily basis, and it should be considered public humiliation. ■

WRITER’S CORNER

“Our names are our first poems.” -Janice Sapigao

What is the story of your name? What names have you been given out of love or bitterness? What do you name yourself?

Ghostline: My name comes from...

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HOMELESS NEWS ROUND UP

MIKE LEE

Misfits fight Homelessness

Oakland, CA

A group of self-described misfits are spending their own money to help combat the crisis of homelessness. As politicians debate and talk about solutions, every Sunday, Punks With Lunch assemble 80 to 180 healthy meals of sandwiches, fresh fruit, water and snacks, then head out to encampments at 35th and Peralta streets at 3:30 p.m. and Fifth and Brush streets at 4:30 p.m. to distribute them.

Besides providing meals, the loosely knit group has expanded its giveaways to include hygiene products, blankets, clothing and whatever else it can come up with. In partnership with Dal Porto’s new Community Outreach Harm Reduction Team they added needle exchange and discarded syringe cleanup, human immunodeficiency awareness work, condom handout, distribution of the anti-overdose product Narcan (naloxone) and training in how to use it.

War againt poor people in Anaheim continues

Anaheim, CA

The war against poor people in Anaheim continues. Best known as the home to Mickey Mouse, there are also about 800 people that also call this tourist paradise home. In an effort to hide homeless people from its 20 million visitors that travel there each year, the city has been removing benches from bus stops along its main tourist thoroughfare, abutting Disneyland. This latest attack means now there is nowhere to sit since the poor are chased from local parks and other public spaces as well as ongoing evictions at the nearby river bed.

Jackpot of \$500,000 for encampment residents in LA

Los Angeles, CA

The Los Angeles City Council Wednesday approved a nearly \$500,000 settlement of a lawsuit that accused the police and city of working with a local business improvement district’s security firms to illegally seize homeless people’s property in Skid Row. “This case really arose because business improvement district officers were coming in and seizing homeless people’s property when those individuals simply walked away to go to a doctor’s appointment or to go to the bathroom,” Shelia Myers, an attorney for the plaintiffs, told City News Service. It should be noted that since 2014, the City has been under Federal Injunction prohibiting police from seizing property that is not abandoned, an immediate threat to health or safety, or evidence of a crime.

Investment to end homelessness raises concerns

Berkeley, CA

The Berkeley City Council recently approved \$400,000 toward an ambitious new temporary shelter program estimated to cost more than \$2 million each year to run. Homeless advocates and homeless people associated with the self-advocacy group First They Came From The Homeless raised several concerns.The proposal indicates that there will first be encampment resolution followed by shelter. Advocates state that based on the history of criminalization, the indication is that encampment residents will either go to jail or to a shelter. Most striking within the proposal is that it lacks mentioning housing as a permanent solution to homelessness, but focuses on expensive temporary shelters which officials admit they do not have the funds to implement.

Oklahoma launches text donation program to fight homelessness

Oklahoma City, OK

The city of Oklahoma City is rolling out a program designed to make it easier for residents to help homeless people.The city, in conjunction with the United Way of Central Oklahoma, is launching a program that allows donors to make donations via text message to agencies that work with the city’s homeless population. Donations will go to the United Way, which will distribute the contributions among 29 public agencies, private groups and faith-based organizations.

Homeless numbers up

Santa Clara County, CA

4,350 homeless individuals were counted in San Jose. This figure is a 7 percent increase from the previous census of 2015, when there were 4,063 homeless individuals in the city. It was also reported 643 homeless encampments, 1,205 individuals who were chronically homeless, 104 homeless families with children, 330 unaccompanied homeless youth and 468 homeless veterans. The total number of homeless people in Santa Clara County is 7,394, a 13 percent increase from the previous count in 2015, when there were 6,556 homeless people.

Homelessness is down overall in Marin County but chronic homelessness is up

Marin County, CA

Marin County Department of Health and Human Services shows the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless in people decreased from 1,309 in 2015 to 1,117. Thirty-seven percent were sheltered and 63 percent were not. Thirty-two percent, or 329 people, were chronically homeless in 2017 compared to 20 percent in 2015, and almost all of them are unsheltered About two-thirds of the homeless people in 2017 said rental assistance or more affordable housing is needed to obtain housing. ■

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By contributing, artists have aided in The Coalition's mission to create permanent solutions to poverty and homelessness while protecting the civil rights of those forced to remain on the streets. This year, the Coalition's organizing and advocacy work will focus on building political power within homeless encampments, decriminalizing homelessness, and fighting for housing subsidies through the city budget process. Auction proceeds also fund the printing of the Street Sheet, giving voice to San Francisco's impoverished people for decades.

We know artists are often underpaid, and their work undervalued. The Coalition wants to recognize the labor of working artists by offering a small 25% commission from the sale. For artists who have the capacity to support our work more fully, you can donate the sale of your piece in its entirety. This is also an excellent opportunity for artists to garner exposure for their work with over 300 attendees and a media campaign reaching thousands across the country.

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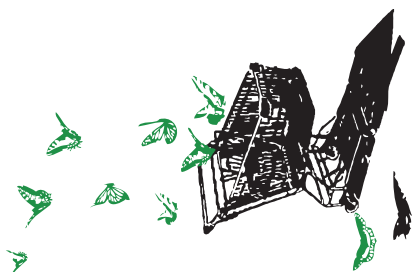
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